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ABSTRACT

Developmental education and underprepared entering college students are discussed in light of the increasing diversity in college student bodies. It is noted that larger numbers of older students are gaining access to higher education. Although specialists in the field of developmental education are equipped to deal with the problems of these new students, it is suggested that the average faculty member is not. Diversity is continuing to increase in student bodies, but volume or enrollment rates are remaining stable or declining. Problems created by these concurrent conditions center around demands for change and setting of priorities. It is recommended that efforts be focused on helping faculty members deal more adequately with diversity in their classrooms while keeping cost increases to a minimum. Special services such as counselors and tutors may be too expensive and it is recommended that students must assume more responsibility for their own learning. More alternative educational options should be made available such as: off-campus programs, flexible scheduling, and credit for prior learning. Advantages and disadvantages of these nontraditional approaches are discussed. The importance of reorienting the educational system to create self-directed learners is emphasized. (SF)

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# LOOKING AHEAD: SPOTLIGHT ON THE LEARNER

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This is the sixth national conference on developmental education--which means that for some years now, there has been sufficient interest in developmental education to justify a national conference. In my mind, a national conference is "justified" when three conditions are met: 1) when the problem addressed is one of national significance; 2) when there is enough progress in meeting the problem to provide the kind of information and discussion that make a conference worthwhile; and 3) when a large number of people elect to spend valuable professional time in the exchange of observations about problems and possible solutions.

Those criteria are probably better met at this sixth national conference than they were at the first. The problem of underprepared college students is bigger and broader than it was six years ago, having spread now from open admissions to selective institutions. Furthermore we have made significant progress in helping underprepared students, and there is a cadre of professionals who have useful research and experience to share.

I have been toiling in the vineyards of developmental education for more than a decade, ever since my research in preparation for Beyond the Open Door (Cross, 1971) convinced me that the New Students walking through the opening doors of colleges would require new forms of education. I am now convinced that

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specialists in developmental education know quite a bit about working with New Students. What troubles me is that the average faculty member isn't any better equiped to work with underprepared students than he or she was ten years ago. The expectation of most classroom teachers is that somehow New Students will be made into learners that are more like traditional students. It is hoped that in this way the troublesome diversity in college classrooms can be reduced and teachers can continue to teach as though the students before them possessed relatively homogeneous learning needs and interests. I think it only fair to say that that hope has not been realized and probably will not be realized. With the addition of older students, handicapped students, and larger numbers of underprepared students, diversity in college student bodies is increasing, not decreasing, and higher education is ill-designed to deal with such diversity.

Developmental educators started with the recognition of the fundamental individuality of students. Early on, you began the search for new ways to organize education so that you could attend to individual differences in learning background. Indeed, if there is a single conclusion that has emerged from the last decade of experience with New Students, it is that there are few universals in learning problems. Your experiences with New Students are now relevant to all higher education, and it is time to apply the lessons learned from developmental education to the restructuring of college teaching.

Our present system of higher education has handled increased volume rather well. Whenever we wanted education to do an additional task, we simply added on new people, new programs, even new colleges to do the job.

The add-or model for change has been popular with almost everyone because it requires no change or additional workload for existing personnel. If there was a desire for a new community education program, for example, new administrators and new faculty were added, new locations found, new curricula taught. Everyone benefitted. People in the community were happy to have new educational programs available; part-time and full-time teachers and administrators were happy to have new job options; the college became larger and more visible in the community. By and large, add-on expansion doesn't complicate anyone's life because new people are added to do new things, and no one has to increase their own workload or change their habits.

The double add-on model is a little more complicated. It is represented by a sequence of demands. The first demand might be for open admissions, which is followed by a recognition of the need for developmental studies. Still, as long as resources are unrestricted, everyone is happy. Open admissions students are welcomed; new counselors are added; developmental specialists are hired; and as long as the add-on model is adhered to, there is no problem. If, however, the add-on model breaks down and the workload of regular faculty increases or there is a need for a change in the habits of people who were not hired to do the new job, then there is increasing dissatisfaction.

I attribute much of the low morale and disaffection of college faculties today to the breakdown of the add-on model. It is a model designed to handle diversity when there is volume to go along with it. The add-on model is expensive, and it is hard to justify adding new staff and new programs when student volume is not increasing. The problem we face today is that diversity is

continuing to increase while volume is steady or falling. The add-on model is not appropriate under these circumstances, and so the workload generated by diversity is working its way into the typical college classroom, creating a demand for change and leaving frustration and unhappiness in its wake.

The problem can be made clear through the use of an analogy that occurred to me as I made my familiar trek to the San Francisco airport recently.

For some years now, we have been busy building new access ramps onto the superhighway of postsecondary education. When the new traffic threatens to cause congestion in any area, we simply add a new lane to the superhighway. There is no real problem as long as the new traffic is traveling at roughly the same rate of speed and going in the same direction as the existing traffic. The problem comes when the new access ramps pour a vastly increased diversity of vehicles and drivers out onto the highway.

What we have on the postsecondary highway now is, to say the least, colorful in its variety. There are VWs and Cadillacs and Peterbilt trucks; old clunkers, sleek and powerful race cars, stock cars carrying an incredible mix of mismatched parts; and lately a few classy vintage antiques have appeared on the scene. Added to the variety of vehicles, we have slow drivers who want to travel in fast lanes, drivers whose only past experience is on country roads, drivers who can't read roadsigns, drivers whose attention is completely occupied elsewhere, and drivers who don't know where they are going.

Until this diversity forced itself on our attention, there were few crossroads at which colleges were forced to slow down, read the signs, and contemplate new directions. Now, however, the highway seems full of signs

reading "caution," "yield," "slow down," and "do not enter." There is concern now that colleges, especially community colleges, have taken on more than they can handle, and conference themes abound with titles such as "Can the Community College Be All Things to All People?" and "Setting Priorities and Making Choices."

And so higher education is now telling itself that there are some decisions to be made. The first decision, I suppose, is whether the old highway design can handle all this diversity and, with reasonable efficiency, carry it where it is going. If it can't, then the decision gets down to where we are going to put traffic diverters and what access ramps we are going to close. That decision, of course, would have all kinds of political ramifications. Realistically, it will probably be politically impossible to close access ramps without providing acceptable alternatives. While some colleges have closed a few access ramps, I think it unlikely that closing access on a national scale represents any long-term solution to the problem. No special interest group that has lobbied for access to education is going to stand quietly by and see their access ramps closed. They would rather be on a clogged highway going nowhere than denied access altogether. Anyway, the taxpayers are going to see the problem as one of inefficient and outmoded highway design and traffic direction, and not as one of overcrowding--and, of course, at this particular time in history they are right.

So let us assume, in the first instance, that we are not going to close access ramps--at least not on any broad national scale. There is some tendency, however, to set up vehicle inspection stations on the access ramps. A majority of states now have some form of minimum high school competency standards, some

of which deny a diploma to students with grossly inadequate basic skills. These inspection stations will presumably screen out vehicles that have no hope of traveling any significant distance on the educational highway without breaking down. But the standards of the inspection stations are so minimal and the whole endeavor subject to so much criticism that it is doubtful that such screening will do much to alleviate the congestion. Moreover, tightening high school graduation standards has little impact on adults, who constitute the fastest growing segment of higher education, and represent even greater diversity in educational backgrounds and goals than 18 year olds.

So let us next explore the possibility of helping faculty members deal more adequately with diversity in their classrooms. That too is going to be difficult. The assigned task of the classroom teacher is comparable to that of a traffic cop who is asked to meet 20 assorted vehicles of widely varying speed and states of repair and to escort them in a convoy to the next exit. They must all stay together throughout the trip; all must start and exit at the same time; and no one may stop along the way for repair or rest without going back to the beginning and joining the next convoy. That image is roughly comparable to taking a group of 20 diverse students at the beginning of the semester, insisting that they all move at the same pace through the same subject matter, exiting "on time" (our time, not necessarily theirs) without compromising anyone's academic standards.

If the convoy system worked, it would in fact ease congestion on the highway. There is no big problem in escorting 20 cars, all in good condition, all traveling at 50 miles per hour, all with drivers attending to the task, to the next exit. The problem increases in direct proportion to the amount of

variation in the convoy. If, for example, in your convoy of 20, you have two cars traveling at 45 miles per hour and one at 30, you can even deal with that situation by expecting the 30 mile per hour vehicle to drop out and slowing the convoy down just a little for the 45 mile per hour cars. But picture yourself escorting a group of 20 cars where two could keep up if they had a wheel alignment, three have such eratic speeds that you can't tell what is wrong without stopping the whole convoy to analyze the situation, two don't want to go to the next exit but they like driving on the highway, three are out of gas and out of money to buy more, two have never been on a super-highway before and are scared to death, and two want to travel 55 miles per hour instead of 50. Those of you who are classroom teachers should feel some empathy with this description. It is patently unrealistic to expect anyone to escort such a diverse group of travelers to a common exit in a predetermined amount of time. And yet that is what we expect of college teachers who are using a highway designed for the more homogeneous groups that characterized higher education in an earlier era.

Some colleges have devised ways of dealing with this diversity, and they work--or at least they help when diversity is not too great and the resources are not too limited. Unfortunately, both of the common methods for dealing with diversity lead to increased costs. Nevertheless, it is possible to either reduce the size of the group or add more personnel to handle the diversity. In remedial education, for example, one of the more effective methods is to teach in very small groups so that individual diagnosis, prescription, and personal attention are possible. Or one can maintain the basic size of the group and deal with diversity through adding specialized services such as counselors,

financial aid officers, peer tutors, basic skills specialists and the like. Both of these methods have been used extensively in dealing with diversity of learning ability in open admissions colleges. But since both methods lead to increased costs because of the increased teacher-student ratio, they are not likely to be looked upon with favor in the years ahead. As almost everyone knows by now, the first things to go in a budget crunch are specialized services and the so-called luxury of small classes. Thus, the old highway design is outmoded and increasingly unsatisfactory.

But if the old design sounds bad for teachers, pity the students destined to travel this outmoded highway. To illustrate the situation from the perspective of the student, let us assume that the highway between my home in Berkeley and the San Francisco Airport is designed and operated like a traditional college. I arrive at the access ramp where I am told that I must wait until five teacher-escorts and a hundred cars are ready to go to the airport. With justifiable indignation, I might complain that I don't need an escort, all I need is a map to tell me where I am going, some road signs to direct me, and a speedometer to inform me of my rate of progress. Patiently, the director of traffic tells me that since my escort knows the way, there are no road signs or maps, and since the group will be traveling at a uniform rate of speed, I don't need a speedometer. All I need is to stay with the group trust the leader, and do as I am told. Frustrated, I might ask why I have to wait for five escorts and a hundred cars. Why can't I enter the highway when one escort and 20 cars are ready to go to the airport? I should have known the answer to that one, of course. All five airport escorts are at the San Francisco Airport now and will not be back to escort me and my group for an hour. The

reason for that is that the toll takers on the bridge collect tolls every hour on the hour, and so all of the escorts and their groups have to be there at the same time. It is, I am told, administratively impossible to handle the toll booths in any other way.

Resigned to what appears to me to be bureaucratic inefficiency, I spend my time observing, with rising interest and some sense of unease, my fellow travelers. One, a self-confident business executive, about 35 years old, driving a snappy sports car, assured me that she could go as fast as the speed limit permitted, and she left no doubt that she could be half way to the airport by now if she didn't have to wait for an escort and people like me. Meanwhile, an elderly gentleman in a beautiful old car said he had plenty of time and would really rather be taking a country road, but there were no maps and no road signs and he didn't know how to get to the airport by any route except the superhighway. Off to one side of the group was a very shy young driver who didn't say anything but his engine was sputtering badly, and I had the impression that he hesitated to go get it fixed because he was too shy to ask for help. Each new driver and car added to the interest and colorful diversity of our group that was preparing to travel the unknown highway.

Finally our escorts arrived and we all started off down the highway trusting in our escort and hoping we could stay with the group. Through the rearview mirror, I saw the shy driver pull off the highway as his engine died. I don't know whether our escort even noticed, but if he did there wasn't much he could do about it anyway. Meanwhile I caught a glimpse of the white knuckles on the mahogany steering wheel as the elderly gentleman, frightened but game, pushed his car to 55 miles per hour. I doubted that he was enjoying

the trip and I knew that the travel was more important to him than the destination. Then much to my horror, my car began to make odd noises. Not being shy, I informed our escort who listened to the car for a few minutes and said it didn't sound too serious and suggested I try to keep up with the group. If the noises got worse, he said, I should request a tutor-mechanic to ride along with me and see if we could fix the problem while we traveled along. Well the noises did get worse. I was fortunate and was able to get a tutor fairly quickly, and as we rode along, I tried to listen to the noises, answer the questions from my tutor, and keep my mind on the speed of the group and its destination. While it was nice to have someone along with me who was lending help and support, I was only too aware that I had dropped from the middle of the convoy to the tail end, and I was getting worried. I didn't think that the noises in my car were my fault, but I wasn't sure. Perhaps they were the fault of the highway system for building bumpy roads or the fault of the people who last serviced the car, but I had a deep-down nagging feeling that maybe there was something wrong with me and my driving ability.

Halfway to the airport, there was a sizeable bump in the road which was labeled with the only sign on the highway. It said "midterm," and it jarred me enough so that the red warning light went on on the dashboard. Alarmed, my tutor and I decided I better stop at the next service station for repairs. My escort was understanding and helpful. He directed me to the service station, called ahead for a appointment, and suggested that when things were fixed, I could join the next convoy to the airport.

Needless to say, I might or might not have made it to this meeting if our highway system were run like our schools. I am fairly certain that I would not

face my next trip with any great confidence or enthusiasm, despite the knowledge that the woman in the sports car arrived at the airport without incident or problem. I am also fairly sure that I would complain bitterly about the inefficiency of the highway system, despite the kindness and understanding of my escort, my tutor, and the people at the service station.

Now, getting an education is admittedly somewhat more complicated than driving a car. But the difference is not as great as we commonly believe. Driving an extremely complicated and lethal machine through a complex maze of signs and directions over hundreds and thousands of miles of roads varying in size from two to eight lanes across unfamiliar terrain is no simple task. Yet almost everyone in our society learns how to read a map, how to follow directions, how to gauge their progress, how to tell when they are lost, how to recognize warning signs, and some even know how to diagnose and repair their vehicles. Our highway system would simply become unworkable were we to create the dependence among drivers that we have created among learners in postsecondary education.

I believe that our educational system is very close to breaking down. It was designed in a different era to serve a different student clientele. There is no end in sight to long-term and increasing diversity, and things will get worse not better for almost every college in the country. We have reached the point where tinkering with an outmoded design for education will almost certainly prove inadequate. Students can, should, and must assume more responsibility for their own learning. We can no longer afford escort service, and even if we could, the escort notion violates so much of the research on effective learning that we must find other alternatives. Educators can and should spend less time escorting convoys and more time marking the route, helping students determine destinations,

providing maps of the alternatives for getting there, diagnosing and repairing learning problems, and in general designing a new educational system that can handle student diversity at reasonable cost.

Let's look for a moment at what is wrong with the escort notion and how these problems might be corrected. In the first place, the final destination is all too frequently unspecified by the teacher and unknown by the students. It is as though all agreed to ride along on the highway and get off at the end of an hour, rather than at some predetermined destination. The correction seems obvious. Students should know the objectives of the class, not just in terms of ground to be covered, but in terms of where they will be when they exit. It is no more reasonable to expect a student to be satisfied when told that the class will read sonnets than it is to expect a highway traveler to be satisfied when told that the convoy will pass Howard Johnson's and get gas at Shell. It is outcomes, not mere pathways traversed, that are the destinations of most learners.

This is not to say that the ground covered and the stops made are irrelevant to the final destination. The teacher has every right and responsibility to plan a route that leads to the destination. The point is that too many teachers are specific about the route and vague about the destination.

As we move into the learning society there will be increasing pressures to define destinations and to offer alternative pathways to reaching them. Nontraditional alternatives are already available to adult learners in virtually every state in the Union. Indeed, off-campus locations, flexible scheduling, credit for prior learning, and a host of other alternatives to the 50-minute class period are so common now that the term "nontraditional" may still mean

historically unusual, but it does not mean uncommon anymore, even in traditional institutions.

There are three implications to these trends toward making alternative routes available:

First, there is heavy criticism now that people using the alternate routes are coming up short of the destination. If the complaints are to be either answered or corrected, destinations must be clearly specified so that we know whether someone using the alternative of, say home study via television, arrived at the same destination as someone attending class on campus three times a week.

Secondly, if alternative routes are available to adults learning off-campus, shouldn't they also be available to those studying on campus? We know that students have different learning styles and that they learn most easily from different forms of instruction. There is little excuse anymore for a department of reasonable size to offer only lecture-discussion modes of learning. Three instructors teaching the same subject might better offer one section of structured, self-paced instruction, one emphasizing interpresonal interaction, and one a traditional lecture-discussion, than to offer three sections of similar format. Teachers, afterall, have different cognitive styles too, and dividends might be expected if teachers selected a mode of instruction at which they excelled rather than one that needs no defense for mediocre performance simply because it is familiar and therefore accepted in higher education.

Third, if alternative routes are to be available, students need good maps and, in some cases, a "trip-kit" or some assistance in planning their best route. Last year, each state received modest funds from the federal government

to help plan Education Information Centers. The EICs are the mapmakers for higher education. Eventually, they should perform the functions of the American Automobile Association, making and distributing good maps and helping people plan routes that best meet their needs. Incidentally, it wouldn't hurt a thing if educators, like the AAA, gave more attention to planning trips that are enjoyable enroute, instead of concentrating solely on channeling everyone onto the freeways.

Finally, I want to give some attention to what is wrong with the old escort notion of education for the two groups of students that are the primary cause of increasing student diversity. I distinguish between New Students and nontraditional students because the educational needs of the two groups are really quite different. In Beyond the Open Door (Cross, 1971), I defined New Students as recent high school graduates who ranked in the lowest academic third of their class. They are typically low achievers from the lower socio-economic levels who lack academic self-confidence and achievement motivation. Nontraditional students, in contrast, are adult part-time learners, and research shows that at the present time, adults who return to college are, by and large, the privileged classes. They tend to be disproportionately young adults in their thirties, who are above average students with good motivation for upward mobility and self-improvement.

There has been a strong tendency in recent years to increase the dependency of both of these groups on professional educators. While I don't deny the apparent dependency of New Students on teachers and counselors for direction and externally imposed discipline, we do New Students no service unless we make a conscious effort to turn the responsibility for their learning over to

them. The ultimate purpose of the human support efforts of developmental education should be to build self-confidence and to lead students to the discovery that, as a result of their own efforts, they can succeed. The objective of the instructional programs of developmental education should be to build the basic skills that will set students free and enable them to achieve a measure of academic independence.

The dependency situation is somewhat different for nontraditional learners. What we seem to be doing in the case of adults is urging them to legitimate their learning through enrolling in college classes. Thus we run the risk of making formerly independent, self-directed adult learners increasingly dependent on formal education to tell them what, where, when, and how to learn. There would be no conflict between college instruction and the lifelong learning movement if the classroom instruction were geared to introducing learners to the resources, methods, and self-discipline to pursue self-directed learning. The fact is, however, that most classroom teachers are still conducting convoys without teaching students how to define their destinations, how to locate learning materials, how to select alternatives from a good map of the terrain, and how to evaluate their progress.

As we move into the learning society, it is especially important that we reorient the educational system to create self-directed learners looking to us for roadsigns rather than escort service--if not for pedagogical reasons, then surely for economic ones. In 1930, there were 10 workers for every retired person in the United States. By 1950, the ratio was seven and a half to one; by 1970, it was five and a half to one; by the year 2020 it is expected to be four and a half to one. And if one adds dependent children to retired

people, there will be fewer than two workers for every nonworker in the society in the beginning of the 21st Century. As the Social Security Agency has found out and the health and education services are about to discover, we cannot afford a society in which huge numbers of nonworkers are increasingly dependent on a relatively small number of workers. It may not be necessary to change the ratio of workers to nonworkers; our society probably can afford to give more attention to the quality of life and to the increased enjoyment of leisure time. It will be necessary, however, to promote the independence of nonworkers for the good of society as well as for the good of individuals. The health professions are already working toward much heavier emphasis on preventive medicine which places more responsibility with the individual, as opposed to traditional medicine which continues to place responsibilty in the hands of the physician, often with very little understanding on the part of the patient. There is an ancient proverb which says, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; give him a fishing rod and you feed him for the rest of his life." Our educational proverb might read, "Teach students subject matter, and you give them perishable information; teach them how to learn, and you give them knowledge and independence for the rest of their lives."

In Europe, this formula for education is understood. The UNESCO definition of lifelong learning goes much deeper than calling for education for adults. It is basically a reform movement, calling on education from grade school through grad school, to prepare students for their futures as lifelong learners. Somehow the revolutionary implications of the Europeon lifelong learning movement got lost in the trip across the Atlantic. Although we in the United States give lip service to the notion that lifelong learning means cradle to

the grave learning, in reality we equate lifelong learning with adult education. We rarely think of it as a call for the reform of elementary education. Yet, if we are to create the motivation and habits for lifelong learning, education at every level must strive to give students increasing responsibility for their own learning.

Developmental education in its origin called for the "development" of the individual, academically, motivationally, and personally. My concern is that as developmental education becomes a more accepted and more traditional function of colleges, the zeal that once existed for the broad mission of helping individuals take charge of their lives, will settle for the narrow, albeit legitimate, mission of teaching the basic skills for admission to the highway of postsecondary education.

Usually, I attempt to make some connection between the title of my speech and message within the first few minutes, but today, I am going to try to make that connection in the final minute. Inevitably, it seems, program planners feel a need for a title before I feel a need to think about the message. Thus months ago when John Roueche and I needed a title for today's keynote, we decided that I could say almost anything I wanted to say under the title "Looking Ahead: Spotlight on the Student"--the title that appears in your program.

The fit between message and title would have been better, I suppose, had I been stimulated to think about my message under the glare of a spotlight rather than under the rush of headlights on the freeway. But despite the problem with mixed analogies, my message is that student learning is the ultimate purpose of education. Whether we illuminate our subject by spotlight or headlight may not be as important as whether we observe carefully what we see before us. As you contemplate the future of developmental education these next few days, I hope your attention will be directed toward what is learned by the student, not only about the subject, but also about the art of learning itself.